

1983

## St. Louis, Missouri

Michael Pfeifer

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## ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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*Michael Pfeifer*

It is a city of bricks.  
Trees and rudimentary birds  
exist like the indefinite horizon  
or a doorway invalid at dusk.  
The sycamores turn into a soft, yellow dust  
identical to mortality.  
It settles on everything:  
on the bare yards  
with a single white mulberry tree,  
in the coils of springs,  
in the mattress and quilt  
of an old affection.  
But mostly the dust sticks to the women  
and to those becoming women,  
just as the rain sticks to everything here—  
without ever really falling.  
East of here is the river:  
a curving, grey seam  
or a fresh weld.  
And at night it has the character of night,  
of a tall woman  
who thinks clean water must spring from all her wounds  
because of the white carnation  
she left on the kitchen table.  
Maybe in the morning  
a shirt floats near the levee.  
Sometimes there is even a pair of black shoes  
with the socks neatly rolled inside.  
Always the same pair of shoes.  
In the city's last hallucination  
there was a telegram in the blue pocket of a thunderstorm.  
In 1927 a tornado stumbled from block to block  
and found a tree full of starlings.  
All the air managed to rush inside  
looking for bones to turn into children.